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A

Discourse

DELIVERED JUNE 4, 1823,

AT THE

ORDINATION

OF

REV. CHRISTOPHER MARSH,

AS PASTOR OF THE

CONGREGATIONAL CHURCH AND SOCIETY

IN

SANFORD, MAINE.

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3

DISCOURSE.

Ezekiel 37. 3, 4. And he said unto me, Son of man, can these bones live? And I answered, O Lord God, thou knowest. Again he said unto me, Prophesy upon these bones, and say unto them, O ye dry bones, hear the word of the Lord.

THE people of Judah had long been carried away captive, and were in bondage in Chaldea; except a remnant left in their own land, to drink still more deeply of the cup of trembling. Ezekiel had been sent to the captives, to humble by divine reproofs the pride of their heart, to predict their deliverance, and encourage them to expect it. The vision of the dry bones, raised into a great army of animated bodies, was designed to confirm these predictions, by shewing the prophet and the people that what was impossible with man was easy with God. And such an encouragement was not unnecessary. To human view, the restoration of the Jews was utterly improbable. They were bondmen to a powerful monarch; they could do nothing for their own rescue; their brethren at home were unable to protect themselves from the same power; they had no allies to appear as mediators or deliverers; their God had cast them out of his heritage for their manifold abominations, and was it likely that he would turn from the fierceness of his wrath?

But the Lord had purposed to restore them, and at the appointed season it was done. The event corresponded with the symbol here used. The house of Judah were brought up out of their graves, and placed again in their own country. It was a wonderful instance of the divine power and favor; but it was accomplished by means. It is worthy of remark, that it was not effected by a series of miracles, such as their fathers witnessed in Egypt, in the wilderness, and on their entrance into Canaan. In a course of revolutions, the empire of Chaldea passed into the hands of Cyrus. Probably at the suggestion of Daniel, that humane ruler liberated the sons of Abraham, and facilitated their return to their own land. The prophesying of Ezekiel, or his predictions and exhortations, had but a remote, though direct, connexion with the event. These sustained the desponding hearts of the captives, and kept alive their expectation for half a century; these directed and animated the prayers of Daniel and other believers among them; and when Cyrus loosed their bonds, these had prepared them to accept the favor with joy, and go forth with believing readiness.

We shall be justified in accommodating this passage for the illustration of

other similar cases, which occur in our own period of the world. A minister of the gospel of Christ often finds himself in the situation of Ezekiel. The work before him is an apparent impossibility ; and the question comes home to him with overwhelming force, *Can these bones live ?* It is a question he can never solve, but by referring it, like Ezekiel, to his master, with humility and faith, *O Lord God, thou knowest.* And from his Master alone can he receive directions concerning his own duty in relation to the event. Often does he need some friendly vision of the power and grace of his Lord, before he can speak another word in his name, or proceed one step more in the path of duty. New visions or revelations he may not expect. But this of the ancient prophet, and many others, are recorded for his instruction, direction, and consolation.

I. I shall mention a few cases, in which the servant of Christ sees before him an apparent impossibility. The question is presented to his mind, *Can these bones live ?*

This difficulty occurs on his first commencement, and often during the whole course, of his ministry.

He finds it, as to his general object, the conversion of sinners to God. He is sent to open the eyes of men, and turn them from darkness to light, and from the power of satan unto God ; to persuade enemies to be reconciled ; to prefer the salvation of Christ without money or price ; and to invite sinners to come to the marriage supper of the Lamb. At first view, it might seem an easy task to persuade sinners to receive pardon ; to save their souls from eternal death ; to forsake the ways of transgressors, which are hard ; to love the Savior, who is infinitely lovely ; and to commence walking in those ways, which are pleasantness and peace. Many a Melancthon has believed it easy ; and begun his work with high expectations of seeing sinners fly to Christ as a cloud, and as doves to their windows. But a short experience convinces him that leviathan is not so tamed. And the eldest and most experienced of Christ's servants have the deepest conviction of the obstacles, which the desperate wickedness of the human heart opposes to the gospel message.

Wherever the preacher is located ; wherever he occasionally delivers his message ; wherever he turns his eye upon his fellow men ; he finds that all, with one consent, make excuse. One is too busy ; another is too young ; another is too much engrossed with cares ; another has no need of a Savior ; another believes Christ will save him, without his exertion, and without amendment. Some will come at a future day ; but now, there is none that understandeth, none that seeketh after God. Except those already converted, every one—every man, every child—has a heart of deadly enmity against the holy

character of God, to whom he entreats them to be reconciled ; a perfect aversion to that Redeemer, whom he would have them love and serve ; a disposition to cherish and excuse that rebellion, of which he requires them to repent. They hear his message ; perhaps assent to its importance ; perhaps are occasionally affected with the truth, and resolve ere long to comply with his solicitations. But they remain dead in trespasses and sins. O how often does he retire sighing to his closet, inquiring, *Can these bones live ?* The same question is virtually proposed to him in the bible ; for there he is required to know the state of his flock, and ardently to desire, and labor, and pray for success in his attempts to turn them to the Lord.

If he thus meets with difficulties in the *common* circumstances of his people, there are *other seasons* when success seems even more remote, and obstacles exceedingly multiplied and magnified. When the youth, the hope of a minister and a church, are mad upon their pleasures, and become early hardened and stupid ; when iniquity abounds, and the minds of multitudes become besotted ; when his hearers are wrangling among themselves, or are alienated from him as well as from his Master ; when false principles of religion are prevalent, and many have thus fortified themselves against the force of divine truth ; when, in *any* way, the bands of their wickedness are made peculiarly strong ; who then can break their cords asunder ? Who can melt such hearers at the Savior's feet, and endue them with a right mind ?

It may be thought, that there is greater hope of success, and that the citadel of the human heart is won with greater ease, *in times of awakening and conviction*. But in such seasons also, the preacher is often pressed with the same difficulty. Take the case of *an individual*. His sins are set in fearful array before him ; he sees he is undone, without excuse, and ready to perish. He is told that Christ receives the trembling penitent. It would seem that human eloquence could soon persuade such a man to come ; that a few more declarations of divine truth would make him willing. And persons, not otherwise far from the truth, speak of such a sinner as not far from the kingdom of heaven ; meaning, in the disposition of his own heart. But alas, his heart is still proud and impenitent, harder than the nether mill-stone, and rebellious as hell. And without the special grace of the Spirit, a transforming power not yet felt by him, he will either embrace some false hope, some refuge of lies ; or more directly resist the holy Ghost ; and thus relapse into deeper stupidity, and become more hardened in iniquity, than before. How often has the faithful pastor wondered at the obstinacy of awakened and convicted sinners, whom nothing could persuade to love the Savior, and cast themselves on his mercy. In such circumstances he has seen the clearest exhibition of that enmity against God, which dwells unobserved in the hearts of all the *securely* impenitent. Here he has cried, with the deepest anxiety, Who

can raise the dead? And here he has found cases, if not before, in which he perceives that Satan cannot be driven out, but by prayer and fasting.

Take the case of a *congregation*, in a time when many among them are awakened and converted. Are not others, and others still, more easily affected with truth at such seasons? Yes; but not more easily convicted of sin; not more easily reconciled to God. And in the progress of the work, and its declension, the teacher learns, and often by painful experience, that human agency has no efficiency one step farther than the Spirit of God moves, except to mar the work. A meeting of anxious sinners, where their feelings are freely disclosed, is one of the best scenes ever witnessed to make man feel his impotency, and enlarge his views of human depravity; one of the best scenes, if sinners submit to Christ, to exhibit the glorious power and sovereignty of divine grace.

Another instance of the same kind is *any unhappy state of a church of Christ*. When a church has become diminished; when the gates of Zion mourn that her solemn feasts are deserted; almost in despair the watchman cries, *Lord, by whom shall Jacob arise? for he is small*. When a church is rent with divisions, and its members are ready to be devoured one of another; the pastor often finds brethren offended harder to be won than a strong city; and is ready to despair of that cause, which seldom prospers when the church is not as an army with banners. When they who should help him, desert him, by their backwardness in the cause of Christ; when they settle upon their lees, as if they were called to inherit the kingdom by idleness and sloth; when they who should be a spiritual priesthood, are conformed to this world, and are eager for its treasures and honors; when they who should live godly in Christ Jesus, recommend religion only by avoiding gross iniquity, or dishonor it by lives of ungodliness; when they are not valiant for the truth, but stand in the way of every good work; this state of things is peculiarly distressing and disheartening to a faithful pastor. An inactive, unholy, prayerless church is the most appalling affliction he can have. Better to him are two or three, who are living epistles known and read of all men; than as many scores or hundreds, who have the form of godliness, but practically deny its power. He will say, If my church would preach daily by a devoted life; if they would stand between the dead and the living, and stay the plague; if they would wrestle with God, the word *would* be with power. But now, what *shall* I do? *Israel doth not hearken unto me; how then shall Pharaoh hear me?*

Let me here remark, how frequent are such professors, and even such churches, in this part of our country. How common it is, that ministers are left to labor alone, without efficient aid from the nominal friends of Christ;

or are baffled in all their endeavors, by those who should be workers together with them. Yea, many can *excuse* their negligence, and even pervert the blessed doctrines of grace to cover their shame. They say in effect, *we are delivered to do all these abominations*; and thus we must do, till it please God to revive us. A horrid plea, which it cannot be necessary to refute.

I name one instance more. A faithful minister's heart sinks within him, when he surveys *a world lying in wickedness*. A stationed preacher does not *confine* his views to the parish where he labors. He feels that the missionary of the cross in the remotest island of the sea is his brother and fellow laborer in the kingdom and patience of Jesus. He feels that he, and his flock too, should have a deep concern in the subjection of all nations to Prince Immanuel. And if he cares for the souls of his own charge, the salvation of the world lies near his heart. But four fifths of the myriads that people the earth are yet in gross darkness. Every where, the chains of superstition are strong as adamant. Into more than a thousand languages the scriptures are yet to be translated. A great host of laborers are yet to go forth, and preach the gospel. Innumerable obstacles are yet to be surmounted. And in the common course of events, the word of life makes but a slow and gradual progress, after it is introduced. O when shall we see all things put under him, who bled for a guilty world? When will the kingdoms of this world become his holy and peaceful kingdom? In surveying the state of our fallen world, we may well say, *The valley is full of bones; they are many, and exceeding dry*. And well may we inquire, *Can these bones live?* Unbelief says, It can never be. Reason is confounded. Nothing but implicit faith can assure us, that the delightful vision can ever be realized.

II. In what manner and spirit should the servant of Christ *reply* to the question which is so often proposed to him?

Ezekiel saw at once that no power, but that which formed all things out of nothing, could convert those dry bones into living bodies. He knew it was easy with God, if it were his pleasure. He knew not his purpose; and therefore humbly referred the decision back to God, *O Lord God, thou knowest*. He probably understood, that the Lord was about to make a revelation to him by symbols; and possibly expected a resurrection of the bones. We may conclude he was ready to receive and execute divine commands, if God should be pleased to employ him in effecting any purpose he had formed. These three things, therefore, seem to be implied in the short answer of Ezekiel; *humility, faith, and waiting* with an obedient spirit *for direction*. He *humbly* confessed his own impotence, and would not decide what it became God to do. He *believed* God could do whatever he purposed, and by

whatever means he chose; and that he had some good and wise purposes which he was about to unfold. He stood, like the angels before God's throne, *hearkening* to the voice of his word, *ready to obey*. That he had believing obedience in his heart, is manifest from this; when a command was given, to which unbelief might have raised a thousand objections, he obeyed without hesitation.

In what more suitable manner or spirit can a minister of the gospel meet the difficulties we have stated?

The power of moral suasion has been tried, and so universally failed, that one would suppose wise men would now abandon it. We mean, the attempt to accomplish the great purposes of the Christian ministry by argument and persuasion, while the preacher discards the special agency of the Holy Spirit. We hazard nothing by saying, that human eloquence, though it is our duty to employ it, never converted a sinner from the error of his ways: never effectually counteracted the influence of vice and delusion; never prevailed, even with a sinner trembling between life and death under conviction, to submit to Christ; never replenished an expiring church, or quickened one that was dead in sin. And we may fairly conclude, that all the eloquence of your philosophical preachers will never convert the world to the obedience of faith. We admit; that the Holy Spirit may have employed the preaching of the man, who has even denied his gracious influence, and disrobed him of the glory of forming the new creation. But the admission of such a fact is no objection to our argument. It becomes the earthen vessels of the ministry to feel and acknowledge their ignorance and weakness; and that, in the great work they have undertaken, all their sufficiency is of God. It becomes us neither to exalt our services above their value, nor to claim that work which God has challenged as his own. In fact, *humility*, in every sense, becomes those who are called to this great work, and are not sufficient of themselves to originate a good thought; who are themselves taken from the depths of pollution to be made stewards of divine mysteries, and workers together with God in accomplishing the noblest of all his works. Humility becomes us in regard to the *success* of our endeavors, and to all the purposes of God not yet revealed. The times and the seasons, and the results of our exertions, God has reserved for his own disposal. There humility will leave them; neither dictating, nor distrusting; confident that infinite wisdom and love will direct to a glorious result. An opposite course too often takes its rise from a self-confident spirit, rather than from a humble and warrantable confidence in God.

But humility does not preclude the exercise of *faith*. The prophet had a perfect confidence that God *could* do all things, and *would* accomplish whatever he had purposed. He probably *supposed* some change upon the

dry bones was intended ; and when he was required to proclaim over them that they should be raised, he *believed* they would be. When he saw a commotion among them, and afterward that they were formed into bodies without breath, he *believed* the declaration of God that breath should enter into them. And when the symbol was explained, and applied to the house of Judah, he *believed* that thus Judah would be restored. Thus we see that while the prophet *knew* nothing of the specific purposes of God, he *decided* nothing ; did not hazard a presumptuous conjecture ; but simply replied, *O Lord God, thou knowest*. We may suppose, that at every stage of the revelation made to him, he implicitly believed. But in what part of this proceeding was his *faith*, strictly speaking, the strongest ? Certainly in the first ; for then he assuredly believed ; and whatever strength his expectation acquired afterwards, arose from the sensible evidence of external circumstances. The faith of the christian is most strong, simple and spiritual, when, (supposing it to be firmly in exercise,) having the word and perfections of God for its basis, he has the least sensible evidence, the fewest promises, the least extraneous encouragement : when he looks steadfastly through the darkest prospects ; confides implicitly in a single promise ; and doubts not, when clouds and darkness are round about the Eternal, that righteousness and judgment are the habitation of his throne. Our faith stands, too often, not in the power of God, but in the wisdom of men. Sanguine christians are often confident that a revival is near, when their faith is grounded principally or entirely on external circumstances, rather than the word of God ; and circumstances too, not so immediately and directly connected with any explicit declarations of Jehovah, as were these which passed before the prophet. We need not wonder that such confidence is often disappointed. It is more wonderful that they should not learn wisdom by the disappointment.

There was in Ezekiel, on this occasion, a pleasing readiness for any service which might be assigned him. He saw he could *do* nothing ; yet he knew not but his Lord might require his services. The language of his heart was, *Lord, here am I ; send me ; command me. If thou require me to raise these dry bones, and fill this valley with men, I will do it ; for I go in the strength of the Lord God*. There was much of faith, and much of love, and much of self-consecration, or a *spirit of labor*, in his thus waiting for commands. Thus should every one feel, who engages in the work of the ministry. Thus should he wait for the directions of his Master when he first girds on the harness, and devote his time, his strength, and his life, to his service. Thus should he inquire daily on his knees, *Lord, what wilt thou have me do ?* This spirit of devotedness to the service springs from humility. And yet, without much watchfulness, humility may counteract it. How can *I* raise the dead ? How can *my* polluted services do any thing but *hinder* the work of God ? Let me creep into some nook of the earth, and stand out of the way of this great work. Could I be of any use, my blessed Lord should have my tongue, my strength,

and every hour of my life. But what can a worm, what can a sinner do? He hears the gracious assurance that *the Lord hath need of him, even of him*; that he will accept what he *can* do, and *bless* it too. This strengthens him to proceed. The thought is delightful, that the Lord will *design* to employ him; and he esteems it his greatest felicity, that his heart has been inclined to hearken and obey. If he may but become a happy instrument of promoting any part of that work of human redemption, in which the Godhead are engaged, he will not select the particular service or place; he will not look to honor or lucre for a recompense; he will not even stipulate for distinguished success. To be permitted to labor for Christ, is his daily solace. To have glorified his Savior God, will be a sufficient reward. To have turned many unto righteousness, will swell his everlasting song.

III. *What reply does the Lord give to his servants, when they refer their case to him under discouragements, and wait for his commands?*

Prophecy, son of man; say unto them, O ye dry bones, hear ye the word of the Lord. In the new testament, the word prophecy does not always imply prediction. It sometimes means no more than preaching, declaring the truth in the name of the Lord. Ministers at the present day can prophesy in no other sense, since none of them are inspired. The Lord commands his servant to go forward in the darkest hours, and preach his word, whether men will hear or forbear. To the impenitent, though blinded by their lusts and the perverseness of their hearts, he must still proclaim the acceptable year of the Lord, and the day of vengeance of our God. To the secure and unbelieving he must still extend the pressing invitations of a bleeding Savior, and beseech them to come in while yet there is room. To those who love delusions he must still hold up the only light that can ever guide them in the way of peace. He must pursue them, in public and private, with the searching doctrines of the bible, expose every false refuge, and beg them to turn to the strong hold. He must press home divine truth upon awakened sinners, not less than upon others; and preach repentance toward God, and faith in our Lord Jesus Christ, till they will mourn with godly sorrow, and embrace the Savior.

If the professed church of Christ is weak and diminished, he must beseech its members to strengthen the things which remain and are ready to die; and direct them to him who remembers his own Zion in her lowest degradation. If professors dishonor the holy name by which they are called, he must repeat to them the solemn warnings and vehement reproofs which our Lord addressed to the seven churches of Asia, and those which abound in every part of the bible against such as are settled on their lees, and are at ease in Zion. And every faithful servant of Christ will urge on all within his influence that this gospel of the kingdom is to be preached in all nations, to bring the whole world under the dominion of Christ. He will urge that he and they must

take part in this work of the Redeemer, or have for themselves no share in his triumphs, no part in his kingdom.

The simple injunction is, *Preach the word*. If it has been rejected a thousand times, preach the word. If men contend and revile, preach the word. If you have heart-rending fears that your beloved hearers will aggravate their doom by rejecting it, still, preach my word. Though Israel be not gathered, preach my word, and it shall turn to you for a testimony, when you render up your account.

But the gospel shall not return void. The word shall prosper, saith the Lord, in the thing whereto I sent it. The servant must submit the disposal of the event to God without reserve. He is not to say this spot will be watered, and that left barren; this family will be visited, and that passed by; this soul will be brought in, but of that I have no hope. Yet he may believe with his whole heart that a happy and glorious event will follow, in relation to the kingdom of God. He has the general assurance, that the Lord will, by his ministry, accomplish his holy and benevolent designs. He may, then, preach the word, and declare that it *will* be fulfilled, every promise, and every threatening. If many, being disobedient to the word, shall fall and perish, Zion shall live, and Christ never want a seed to serve him. If the children of the kingdom shall be cast out for their wickedness and unbelief, the very ends of the earth shall be brought in. The servant therefore may labor and pray, in hope, in believing expectation that sinners will be saved, and his Lord be glorified. He may believe that his preaching of gospel truth, which is the appointed means for accomplishing the divine purposes in the redemption of men, will in some way or other promote and extend that kingdom which shall never end. He must preach the plain truths of the bible, and never resort to human expedients. And while he does this, he may wade through seas of difficulties, and press through hosts of enemies, and *against hope believe in hope*, to obey his ascended Lord.

The sum of the whole is, that Christ commands his servants to preach, though they are but as the ram's horns before Jericho, or as the clay on the eyes of the blind. But he bids them preach, as the declared means of preparing a people for his praise. Therefore it is *their* part, neither to boast, nor despond; but implicitly to believe, and obey. They are not to imagine themselves sufficient of themselves, nor to decline acting as instruments in the Lord's hand. If the apostles had gone forth confident on their own wisdom and power, the Lord would have poured contempt on their puny efforts, and have taken the work out of their hands. If they had said, the work is impossible, and declined the service, the Roman empire would not have renounced idolatry, and multitudes would not have been converted to Christ. A work is to be effected, the salvation of a great multitude which no man can number.

The Lord deigns to employ means, the preaching of his word, by men called of him for the purpose. *Without* the means, the work will not be wrought. *With* them, it will be, though earth and hell oppose it. *Alone*, ministers might sit down and weep in despair. But they are *not* alone, for Christ has said, *Lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world.* Therefore, preaching, laboring, praying, waiting, they receive the blessing. The holy Spirit descends; mountains become plains, and vallies are exalted; sinners are converted; Zion rises from her desolations; and the earth is filled with the glory of the Lord. How sweet to labor for him, who groaned and bled for us. How sweet to feel that we can do nothing; and yet through Christ strengthening us can do all things. How delightful to feel and say, before the throne, *Not unto us, not unto us,—we could repeat it forever,—not unto us, but unto thy name, O Lord, be the glory, and the victory, and the praise.*

This subject claims the special attention of the *Pastor Elect.*

MY DEAR BROTHER,

This Council would not have proceeded in the solemnities of this day, if they had not seen evidence that the glory of God, in the salvation of sinners by Jesus Christ, has through grace a deep interest in your heart; and that you are prepared to put yourself into the hand of the Lord, to be employed as an instrument of effecting some portion of that work in which the holy Spirit is now employed, of bringing souls to the Redeemer, and building up his church forever. We trust you feel that you are *but* an instrument, and that all your strength is of God. If this is the sentiment of your heart, you feel that the responsibility you are assuming is vast beyond conception. You are to keep your own heart; to lead a godly life in a wicked world; to stand fast in the faith; to expound the sacred scriptures, keeping fast by the lively oracles; with a most anxious solicitude not to frustrate your own object by any deviation from that standard, in doctrine, or conduct, or spirit. You are called to guide the flock of God, and to raise it from a deep depression. You are called to preach the gospel in a region of comparative desolation. In this work you will have but few helpers. Your church is but a handful, instead of a host strong in the Lord and in the power of his might. Are you ready to say, the work is too great; the difficulties are insurmountable; and the case is desperate? We will not suppose that you indulge such thoughts. We trust indeed that you survey the field before you in all its length and breadth; and that you see the bones of this valley, as they are, many and exceeding dry. But we do also trust, that you gird on your armor in the strength of Christ; and that you resolve to set the Lord always before your face, that you may not be moved.

Take courage, then, for the Lord *will* be with you. In his name, and in his strength, set up your banner. The fewer human helps you have, perhaps

you will more singly trust the Lord. The greater your work and discouragements are, the more deeply perhaps you will feel that you *must* have the aid and blessing of the Spirit, or effect nothing. Is it your first and last desire to be employed in this work, whatever may be your lot? Is it your desire to preach, and labor, and live, and die, for Christ and the souls of your people? Would you wait on the Lord for strength and success, and give him all the praise, when the blessing comes? Come, then, and bind yourself to the Lord forever, to serve him in the gospel of his Son. Here take your stand, and prophesy upon the dry bones, and say unto them to your dying day, *Hear, hear ye the word of the Lord.* Here stand, as a messenger of the Lord of hosts to guilty men, and proclaim to them the unsearchable riches of Christ. Here stand and walk, as a living example of the holy efficacy of the truths you teach. Here stand, here kneel, day and night, before the God of salvation, bearing the precious souls of your charge before his mercy seat; entreating, that if it may be his blessed will, you may not be to one of them a savor of death, but that he would make them all willing in the day of his power.

I could enlarge in giving you counsels and exhortations; for I have had much experience of human inebecility and waywardness; and some, I trust, of the infinite grace and condescension of our Lord. But time fails. Receive then, my brother, in one word the sum of my counsels and my prayers. Be humble, prayerful, and devoted. Abase yourself, and exalt the Lord, always. Declare the whole counsel of God, and wait at the mercy seat for his guidance and blessing. And may the Spirit of the Lord ever live in you and your church, and breathe into all your congregation the breath of life. You are weak; and years hence you will be still weaker; But wait on the Lord, and he will renew your strength; wait, I say, on the Lord.

This subject deserves the attention of this Church. How few *Aarons and Hurs will our brother have, to sustain his drooping hands. And with a church, under God, rest exceedingly the cause of Christ, and the success of his gospel. But away with distrust. The Lord saveth not by many or by few. He hears the fervent effectual prayer of two or three. And who knows, brethren, but you and a few believing sisters, may be the honored instruments of preserving, and reviving, and extending the kingdom of our Lord in this place, and of perpetuating it to the latest period of time? O believe, brethren, that it *may* be. Say, with dependence on divine strength, that it *must* be. Say, you will arise, and call on God. Say, you will give Zion's God no rest, till he make *your* Zion a praise in the land. Do not say, if the Lord would make windows in heaven, this thing might be. Say, you will *try*; that you will not suffer the cause of Christ to decline, and the souls of this people to be jeopardized, by *your* neglect.

*The Church in Sanford contains but 6 male members.

It pleased God that the labors of your late respected and lamented Pastor* should close, without that *general* effusion of the Spirit upon this society, which has been granted in many places. But the mercy of the Lord is not clean gone forever. He gives you, this day, a token for good. Believe, then, that his arm is not shortened; and *prove* him, that his ear is not heavy. We hope to hear, brethren, that you are importunately wrestling with God, like Jacob; and that, like Israel, you have power with him, and have prevailed. We hope to hear that your little one has become a thousaud, a strong nation, a holy city, whose light is seen from far.

In conclusion, we beseech this whole congregation to feel a present and personal interest in the great things of God, and of their own eternal destiny. We trust there are many in this assembly, who have been made alive to God, and are alive to God, glorifying him daily in their bodies and in their spirits, which are his. We hope they are now pouring out their hearts with ours before God, for a blessing on the congregation with whom they are mingled. But I must be ignorant indeed of the bible, of human nature, and of the spiritual state of this region, not to fear that in this great number of people, there are many, even a large majority, who do not love our Lord Jesus Christ, but remain dead in trespasses and sins. O what a distressing thought. So many souls living in God's world, but not loving, worshipping, or serving him; favored with the glorious gospel of his Son, and refusing to obey; just on the verge of the grave, and not fleeing from the wrath to come; and attending to witness the solemnities of this day, only to aggravate your doom. O my friends, I am almost ready to plead to be excused from calling upon you to repent and believe. But I dare not. Your blood must not cleave to my garments when I meet my Lord. But what shall I say? I see before me a valley of dry bones, and lo, they are exceedingly dry. Here are hearts, hardened by the gospel; souls, guilty of abusing mercy, and of trifling with a Savior's blood, and of resisting the holy Ghost; those sins of which the heathen are innocent.

Yet speak I *must*; and speak I *would*; for peradventure an arrow may pierce at least one adamantine heart. Hear then, my fellow-sinners, the word of the Lord. Jehovah, not man, commands you, this day, this hour, this moment, to repent and believe on the Son. Jehovah Jesus, not man, entreats you to flee, in all your guilt and wretchedness, into the arms of his mercy. Jesus, your Judge, declares to you, that except ye repent, ye must perish. The Spirit and the Church say, Come. They that hear the word at the mouth of God, and address you in his name, say, Come. Whosoever will, let him come, and take the water of life freely. Who then will flee, and lay hold on eternal life? Do I see no shaking among the dry bones? Are there none that will hear the word of the Lord? Are there none that will have pity on

*Rev. Moses Swett, who died Aug. 31, 1822, aged 68.

their own wretched ruined souls ? Merciful Father, *thou* hast compassion, I come to thee. I am in a strait ; undertake thou for me. These are the souls thou hast made ; O have pity upon them, and send forth thy Spirit. *Come, O breath of the Lord, and breathe on these slain, that they may live.*

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